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FOLLOW-UP TO THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN: IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES AND ACTION IN THE CRITICAL AREAS OF CONCERN

Draft agreed conclusions submitted by the Vice-Chairperson of the Commission, Zakia Amara Bouaziz (Tunisia), on the critical area of concern: education and training of women

1. All actors - Governments, national, regional and international bodies, bilateral and multilateral donors and non-governmental organizations - should make special efforts to reduce the female illiteracy rate to at least half its 1990 level, with emphasis on rural women, migrant, refugee and internally displaced women, and women with disabilities, in keeping with the Platform for Action.

2. All actors should make special efforts to achieve the benchmarks set in the Platform for Action related to universal access to basic education and completion of primary education by at least 80 per cent of primary school age children by the year 2000; to close the gender gap in primary and secondary school education by the year 2005; to provide universal primary education in all countries before the year 2015; and to provide multilateral and bilateral assistance on a priority basis for the implementation of these goals.

3. Governments that have not yet done so should prepare at national level their strategies and action plans for implementation of the Platform for Action, and these should indicate how relevant institutions and non-governmental organizations will coordinate action to meet the goals and targets for education. These implementation strategies should be comprehensive, have time-bound targets and benchmarks for monitoring purposes, and include proposals for allocating or reallocating resources for implementation. The support of the international community should be enlisted, including additional necessary resources.

4. Governments and international organizations should apply, as soon as possible, the 20/20 concept and the agreed target of 0.7 per cent of the gross national product of developed countries for overall official development assistance, as accepted at the World Summit for Social Development and reinforced in the Platform for Action in a gender-balanced way.

5. In addressing unequal access to and inadequate educational opportunities, Governments and other actors should promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes, taking into account girls and women in especially difficult circumstances. The education, training and lifelong learning of women should be mainstreamed in national human development plans and policies at all levels and in equal-opportunity policies, with an emphasis on employment and employability of women. National machineries for the advancement of women should join with policy makers in government and with the private sector to ensure that all such policies are responsive to gender concerns, and that women and their organizations participate in the policy-making process.

6. National statistical offices, women's groups, training providers, employers, workers' organizations and research institutions should provide women with the labour-market information needed to identify the training that will yield the highest pay-off, and to obtain the best possible jobs. This information is also needed by government policy makers and training providers. A redesigned, relevant and up-to-date labour-market information system should provide data disaggregated by sex on training, current employment trends, income and future employment opportunities.

7. The relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of training should be enhanced through the establishment of alliances among the various partners, including the public and private sectors, non-governmental organizations, trade unions, organizations of employers and cooperatives. The State has a major responsibility in promoting and facilitating such alliances by developing the regulatory framework, the financing mechanisms, the incentive schemes and the technical support needed in this regard. Governments should be ultimately responsible for filling gaps in education and training provisions, especially for women in poverty, women in rural and depressed areas, and women with social, economic, cultural or physical constraints. Employers' and workers' organizations should play a critical role in alliances and should be actively involved in decision-making processes and the provision of training at national and decentralized levels.

8. Educational planners should consider education, technical training and lifelong learning as integral parts of a continuum. This implies that knowledge and skills acquired in formal as well as in informal education and traditional knowledge should be valued and credited. A holistic approach should be adopted, ensuring that women enjoy equality throughout the process in a new culture of learning involving individuals, enterprises, organizations and society at large.

9. Educational planners and policy makers should give renewed importance to mathematics, science and technology education, information services and professional guidance for women. In order to develop the skills required, women need to have full access to education at all levels of science and technology,

including use of modern technologies, to vocational training and to lifelong learning. Efforts should be made to draw more women into science and technology and to encourage them to participate actively in the development of new technologies, in the stages ranging from design to application, monitoring and evaluation. To bridge the gender gap and increase the access of girls and women, all actors must use a wide range of strategies and mixed modalities.

10. The revision and gender-sensitive reform of textbooks, teaching aids and curricula as well as awareness-raising and obligatory gender training for teachers are prerequisites of the development of non-discriminatory education and training. The teaching profession and educational administrators should achieve a gender balance and, to this end, undertake administrative reforms to increase the number of female principals, administrators and planners.

11. Governments should create an enabling environment to retain girls in schools. All actors should combine their efforts by providing school feeding programmes, transport and boarding schools. The contribution of non-governmental organizations to all fields of education and in particular to lifelong learning is of importance.

12. The United Nations system should compile best practices or strategies for retaining girls in the education system through secondary school and should provide opportunities for lifelong education relevant to shifting employment opportunities and social change.

13. The Secretary-General should continue to analyse and widely disseminate to Governments and non-governmental organizations through Women 2000 and other publications in the official languages of the United Nations, information on education and training of women in the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and in mainstreaming a gender perspective.

Notes

[1] Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995 (A/CONF.177/20 and Add.1), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.